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AUTHOR Keyserling, Mary Dublin
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ABSTRACT

An overview of the present shortage of day care facilities in the United States is presented in this speech. Statistics cited on the number of working mothers with children under the age of 6 and the number of day care licensed homes and centers show that the shortage of licensed day care facilities is much more acute than it was five years ago. Also, there are a great number of mothers who are ineligible for subsidized day care, but whose incomes are too low to buy good private care. Government programs provide day care for only 2% of the migrant children who need it, and for only about 10% of the children at poverty or near poverty levels. Mothers in federally sponsored work training programs are often unable to continue participation because of lack of child care. It is recommended that over the next five years a goal be set for provision of developmental day care services for at least 2 million additional children, merely to catch up with the current need. Participation of the clothing industry, some hospitals, and some governmental departments in providing day care for children of their employees and the growing emergence of franchised day care systems are discussed. [Filmed from best available copy.] (NH)

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The Day Care Challenge: The Unmet Needs of Mothers and Children

by

Mary Dublin Keyserling
Consulting Economist; Former Director, Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor

Eastern Regional Conference - Child Welfare League of America

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The acute shortage of day care facilities in America today constitutes one of the most important items of unfinished business on our national social action agenda. It is long since time we awakened to the magnitude of need for good day care, at an affordable price, for all children who can benefit. The cost to our society for our failure to rise to this challenge is immense.

Two groups of children are in especially urgent need of developmental day care. In order of numerical magnitude, the first is comprised of children of employed mothers who cannot arrange for satisfactory care for them at home. The second group of children are those whose mothers are economically-deprived, who are not now working, and who are unable to provide the developmental opportunities which should be the birthright of every American child. Let us consider the magnitude of day care needs of these two groups of children.

One of the most dramatic social changes of the past few decades has been the very rapid increase in the employment of women. Today, more than 32 million of our women are in the labor force. While the number of all working women has increasedabout two and a half fold since 1940, the number of working mothers has increased about eight fold. The number of employed mothers now exceeds 12 million. More than half of all mothers with children aged 6 to 17 are jobholders. About one third of all mothers, with children under the age of 6, totalling over 4½ million women, are workers, and are faced while they are away from home with the difficult problem of obtaining adequate care for their children.

Most working mothers seek jobs for compelling economic reasons. Let us look first at the income situation, in 1968, of families headed by men and with working mothers of

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children less than 6 years old:

> Without the mothers' incomes, 8 percent of these families would have been in abject poverty, making do with less than $3,000 a year;
>
> Without the mothers' earnings, over two fifths would have had to struggle to get by on incomes of between $3,000 and $7,000 a year;
>
> About 85 percent would have had incomes of less than $10,000 a year without the mothers' earnings.

The 650,000 mothers of preschool children, and who don't have husbands, have even more pressing reasons to seek employment than working wives.

There are now close to 6 million children under the age of 6, whose mothers are in the labor force. What do we know about the care these children receive when their mothers are away from home?

That a large proportion of these children are inadequately cared for when their mothers are away at work was clearly revealed by a survey made several years ago by the Women's Bureau and the Children's Bureau. The survey related to mothers who worked half the year or more in the survey year. While it was thus not complete, it was highly indicative. It revealed that of all the children under the age of six, covered by the survey, nearly half were cared for in their own homes. Home care may often be very good. In many cases it may be very poor. I am now directing a study of day care in over 90 cities for the National Council of Jewish Women. Many hundreds of able women volunteers have visited a large number of day care centers and family day care homes, interviewed mothers and many people in their communities most knowledgeable about day care needs and services. Their reports provide an invaluable source of current information. Findings will be presented later this year in a report to be entitled, "Windows on Day Care." Our analysis of all the material received is not yet complete, but we have summarized information for a preliminary and representative group of cities. Working mothers interviewed in these areas reported a far greater degree of dissatisfaction with care of children in their own homes than in day care homes or centers.

The Government study indicated that fathers provided about 30 percent of all home care. Can the many fathers who work at night, and sleep during the day, provide

developmental care for small children? In many families, siblings were responsible for children only a little younger than themselves. Our Council women reported many 8 and 9 year olds kept from school to look after younger brothers and sisters. Few mothers who depend on maids or baby sitters in the home can afford to pay enough to obtain well trained household helpers. It is therefore not surprising that so many mothers were dissatisfied with this type of child care service.

The Women's Bureau-Children's Bureau study reported that 18,000 children under the age of 6 were latch-key kids on their own. I believe this is an underestimate. Few mothers will answer, when asked by a Census taker, that they were totally unable to make any arrangements whatsoever for care. There shouldn't be a single little child in America left alone to fend for himself.

Nearly a third of the preschool children within the scope of the two-Bureau study were cared for in homes other than their own. Council women, seeing home care at its best, felt it was better than some of the center care observed. But they and many others have told us that the overwhelming majority of children in day care homes receive custodial care only. Some of the day care homes Council women described were unbelievably bad. Let me cite one example: a day care home licensed to care for no more than 6 children. In it were found 47 children cared for by the day care mother without any assistance. Eight infants were tied to cribs; toddlers were tied to chairs; and 3, 4 and 5 year olds coped as best they could.

The fault doesn't necessarily lie with licensing officials, most of whom carry loads far too heavy to permit adequate inspection and enforcement. And there are, we believe, more unlicensed homes in the country than licensed. We, you and I, are the guilty parties. It is we who are failing to see that sums are appropriated sufficient to make licensing meaningful. And the sums available today for the training of day care mothers are negligible.

Fifteen percent of all the under sixers went with their mothers to their places of work, according to the Government study. Experience in the early years has profound

and irreversible effects. A large part of intelligence and behavior patterns is developed then. Will a child playing on the floor of a back room of a dry cleaning establishment have much opportunity to realize his or her potential? What is the price we pay as a society for the vast amount of child neglect we now take for granted?

Finally, only six percent of the preschool children of working mothers covered in the Women's Bureau-Children's Bureau survey were cared for in group centers.

This survey doesn't tell us what proportion of these children received good, bad or indifferent care. Reports of National Council interviews thus far analyzed indicate that mothers, on the whole, are more satisfied with center care than with other types of service. Many centers visited by Council women were excellent. But some were so poor they should not be permitted to continue in operation.

In 1965, the year covered in the Government study to which I have referred, there were about 250,000 day care places in licensed homes and centers. Since 1965, we have added about 400,000 places in licensed facilities. Despite this increase, I believe the shortage of licensed facilities for the children of working mothers is considerably more acute today than it was five years ago.

First, the number of children under the age of 6 with working mothers has risen more than 800,000 since 1965. Secondly, a large percentage of the 400,000 added day care places have been subsidized by public funds and hence are used very largely for the care of children in poor families. Very few families with two working parents are eligible for subsidized care. A working wife is an antidote to poverty, with relatively few exceptions. Subsidized care, however, does assist the many working mothers who head their families but who don't earn enough to escape poverty.

I do believe the growing day care shortage is leading an increasing proportion of working mothers to turn to the inferior care available in unlicensed facilities.

The number of working mothers who are not eligible for subsidized day care for their children but whose incomes are too low to enable them to buy good care is very large indeed. About two thirds of all working mothers, I estimate, are in families

with incomes between $4,000 and $10,000. Few families at this income level can afford to pay for good full day care which may cost from $2,000 to $3,000 or even more, per child per year.

Need is not only a matter of how many places there are, but also how adequate the places are, how much they cost, and how accessible they are. And what, I might add, of good infant care? It is extremely costly, it is much needed and is virtually nonexistent. Care at night time and on week ends when many mothers have to work, is almost impossible to come by.

Now to turn to the second group of children no less urgently in need of good day care - those children in poverty who are economically, educationally and physically seriously disadvantaged. There is some overlap, of course, with the first group I have considered. Many low income mothers give their children excellent care; many can not.

Today there are about three million children under the age of six in families below the poverty line. (Let me interpose one encouraging note: the number of such children has been just about cut in half during the past decade.) How many of these children would benefit by good day care, part or full day, we do not know. But we do know that only a very small percentage now receive it. Their care requires public outlays. A decade ago the Federal Government provided no funds for day care; this fiscal year it appropriated over $200 million. Most Federal funds are matched by State and local funds, with the Federal share of the larger programs ranging from two thirds to 85 percent of total expenditures.

About 80,000 disadvantaged children are in Head Start full day programs. About twice that number receive part day care. The National Council on Economic Opportunity in its report to the President in 1969 said, however, that Head Start should have reached six times more children than it then was doing.

It is reported that several government programs now provide day care for about 13,000 children of migrant families - 2 percent of the 700,000 migrant children who need it, according to the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity.

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It is estimated that approximately 50,000 children from low income families receiv- day care provided under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act which has expanded services to AFDC children.

Some of this care is paid for in connection with Manpower Training Programs of the U.S. Department of Labor. For example, under the Department's Work Incentive Program, generally known as WIN, funds are made available for the care of children of welfare mothers accepting training for employment. The idea was excellent but as a recent Departmental report of the program has pointed out, "Lack of child care is the most serious barrier for any employment program involving mothers. And it is one that WIN has yet to overcome, primarily because WIN legislation requires State Welfare Agencies to provide 25 percent of child care funds and because no Federal money for the acquisition or construction of facilities was provided."

Most mothers in the WIN program have to make their own day care arrangements. These are very often haphazard, subject to frequent change, interruption and breakdown. In consequence, a large number of mothers are forced to drop out of training, their employment aspirations frustrated.

Model City legislation also provides some money for day care facilities for disadvantaged children.

In all there are some 60 or more Federal programs which help to fund day care, almost entirely for disadvantaged children. In addition, state and local public and privately contributed money is available. It has been estimated that in 1969 there were about 200,000 children, in poverty or near poverty, in wholly or partially subsidized, licensed day care homes and centers. The number, according to many knowledgeable people interviewed in different parts of the country, should have been as much as ten times higher.

In addition to children of working mothers, and children is especially deprived homes in which the mother doesn't work, there are many others whose need for day care presents a compelling challenge. There are handicapped children who can fare better outside of their own homes, and children of mothers who are studying or in work

training, or whose volunteer services in the community make a vital contribution. In need of day care are all the additional children whose parents desire it for them and at a price they can afford.

The overall unmet need for good day care is huge. My own experience convinces me we should set a goal for the provision, over the next five years, of developmental day care services for at least 2 million additional children, merely to catch up with the worst of current backlog. At least half these places should be fully subsidized and the rest partially subsidized, with fees charged according to income. This suggests the need for Federal appropriations of $3 to $4 billion a year for this purpose. And, as I have said, this does not take into account the likelihood of a rapid rate of increase in the number of children needing good day care in the decade of the '70's.

How many additional children must be factored into the need picture in the immediate years ahead? If the number of working mothers rises as rapidly between 1970 and 1980 as in the preceding decade, we will have close to 2 million additional working mothers of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ million more preschool children by the end of the decade. But my own guess is that there will be a faster rate of increase in the labor force participation rates of mothers in these years ahead. In 1960, one out of five mothers of preschool children were in the labor force. Today nearly one out of three are workers. It is difficult to estimate how much faster the rates may rise in the next ten years.

We will certainly open up far more training and work opportunities for welfare mothers who want them. Some 800,000 mothers with at least one child under the age of 6 now receive public assistance. That a majority of these women would elect to work if appropriate employment and day care service were available, is documented by a number of studies. One, for example, a survey of welfare families in New York City, found that 6 out of 10 welfare mothers would prefer to work, provided their children were adequately cared for.

Another factor which may accelerate the rate of increase in the labor force participation of mothers with young children is that, unless their husbands have relatively high incomes, those above the poverty line are more apt to work than those

below it. We shall undoubtedly expand the war on poverty and reduce still further the proportion of our families at the lowest income levels.

Stll another factor is the desire of an ever increasing proportion of young women to contribute not only as wives and mothers but as jobholders and volunteers. Their abilities are needed. Price rises have increased women's incentive to add to family income. So too has increasing education advantage; the higher the education of women, the more likely are they to be active participants in society.

If we are to rise to the day care challenge and meet it more effectively, it is essential that we not only set public financing sights far higher; there is much that can be done to stimulate private and voluntary action. New approaches to the delivery of day care have been made during the past decade which could be very greatly and constructively expanded.

In many industrialized countries of the world day care centers have been established by employers for the children of employees. The interest of business in child care arrangements in our own country has been slow to develop,but is now beginning to gather momentum. A number of firms have developed facilities in or near their establishments. Others are contributing to existing day care agencies or are helping to found nonprofit corporations for the provision of service.

One venture of special interest is a joint undertaking on the part of labor and management in the clothing industry. The Baltimore Joint Regional Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union of America formulated a day care proposal a few years ago, and presented it to the 70 clothing manufacturers in the 5 states in the region with whom the union has contracts. The employers agreed to contribute a percentage of their gross pay rolls to a special fund for the creation and operation of day care centers for the children of employees. Women constitute about 80 percent of the industry's workers.

Four centers, with a combined capacity for the care of about 1000 children are now in operation. Many more are in the planning stage. Mothers pay about $5 a week for the care of a child.

Last year, the Mid West Regional Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union opened a day care center in Chicago and a second is in propspect. Financing is by the Amalgamated Social Benefits Association provided by employers and administered by the Union.

The industry employers are enthousiastic. These projects assure a more stable, dependable work force. Mothers have peace of mind knowing that their children are getting good care at a price well within their reach. And most of all, the children benefit.

How appealing the first center to open is, can be illustrated by a story. A little boy of about seven walked just ahead of me with his mother touring the center on opening day. He loved everything he saw: a wonderful playground, toys galore, books, lovely chairs and tables and even toilets and sinks scaled to tiny tot size. There was light and color everywhere. As the little fellow came out of the center I heard him say to his mother, "Gee, Mom, I wish I was a kid again." So did we all.

And many other American industries might well follow suit.

When I was Director of the Women's Bureau, we felt our Department - the Department of Labor- should set an example of good employer policy. As a result of our efforts a day care center for 60 children was established. It is an exciting place, just a short walk from the Department. The Department of Agriculture has also opened a center and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare is planning to do so. I am told that the National Institutes of Health are among a number of other Federal agencies which are now expressing interest.

Hospitals have also recognized their stake in meeting need. A recently compiled list names some 125 hspoitals which now provide day care for the children of medical, nursing and other personnel. There may be others in addition. Fees are scaled according to income, with costs brought within reach by hospital subsidy. About two thirds of the centers are open 6 or 7 days a week. One important feature which characterizes a significant number of hospital day care programs is the participation of volunteers, not only as aides, but as program initiators and fund raisers.

Other institutions such as universities and colleges are, in increasing numbers, also providing care for pre-school children of students, faculty and other staff members. These centers afford a splendid training ground for young people entering the fields of early childhood education.

One development which many of us will watch with cautious interest is the emergence of day care centers operated under franchised or chain systems. Some are nationwide; others have been organized on a statewide or local basis. Operators purchase the right to use the franchising company's name and may receive instructional and educational information and materials, construction plans and operational programs, and, in some cases, personnel training and a variety of other services. How many such parent enterprises now exist is not knowabut close to 50 have come to my attention and there may be many more. The plans of some of these companies are large scale. One alone has announced its intention to open 1000 centers in the next few years to care for as many as 100,000 preschoolers.

Such centers as these seek to reach the growing middle income market, charging fees of $20 to $30 a week and more. The basic problem these centers pose is: can they offer quality care? Quality care is costly, necessitating as it does not only educational and developmental components, but medical, nursing, nutritional and other services. The average cost per child, for instance, for the care provided in the 16 nonprofit centers now operated by the National Capital Day Care Association in Washington, exceeds $40 a week. It is, to say the least, highly dubious whether quality care can be provided on a commercial basis at a price large numbers of parents can afford and still provide returns on the investment both to franchiser and franchisee. One large franchise venture with more concern for standards than most others with which I am familiar has already dropped out of the picture, citing the difficulties of providing good care at a price within the reach of most families.

In the years ahead there will be much experimentation. Many communities will seek to improve the services rendered by family day care homes and centers by raising

licensing standards, seeking more effective standards enforcement, bringing a larger proportion of the providers under the closer supervision of appropriate agencies, and by enlarging training opportunities.

My own view is that while every possible development that will expand the supply of high quality day care should be encouraged, until very substantial amounts of public funds become available, the gap between need and available good care will remain shocking. We shall ultimately, I believe, have to move toward the vast expansion of neighborhood based day care centers, financed in whole or substantial part by public funds.

Public support for far reaching governmental action is strong and growing. The December White House Conference on Children which brought 4,000 delegates to Washington, representing every shade of American opinion, made this clear. It was the Forum on Day Care which drew the largest number of participants and also generated the most interest on the part of the press. The Day Care Forum itself supported a resolution calling for Federal funding to make possible the provision of quality care for a million additional children within the next three or four years.

Members of Congress have already responded to growing public awareness of the magnitude of need for action on a large scale. Many bills have been introduced and many more will soon be in the hopper. Extensive hearings held last year aired the day care problem in greater depth than ever before. Additional hearings will be held this year.

The Administration's Family Assistance Plan, embodied in the Welfare Reform Act, which failed to pass last year, will soon be reintroduced. It called for funds to finance day care for 150,000 preschool children of parents who, it was hoped, could be moved from public assistance into training and employment. Senator Long introduced an Amendment to the Welfare Reform Act to establish a national agency and build day care centers, set standards and administer child care.

Among the many other bills introduced were ones sponsored by Senator Mondale , and by Senator Prouty, by Representatives Brademas, Dellenbach, Mink, and Reid, and which would have authorized sizeable amounts for facility renovation, expansion and construction,

and for the enlargement of child development opportunities in day care, for health and social welfare needs of young children, for parent involvement and for the training of staff. Senator Bayh has announced his intention of introducing legislation early this year calling for appropriations for child care of $2 billion in the first year of the program, $4 billion in the second and $6 billion in the third. Senator Javits has proposed a bill to make available $900 million for child care services in the next fiscal year.

Other proposals would increase the dollar limits on income tax deductions for child care. The present law permits a deduction of only up to $600 for the care of one child and up to $900 for 2 or more children up to the age of 12, providing the child care enables the mother to be gainfully employed. The full deduction is permitted if family income is under $6000 and is reduced $1 for each $1 of income above that amount. It is long since time these limits were substantially increased.

What legislation will be enacted is, in the last analysis, up to us as citizens. Last year a Gallop Poll indicated that 64 percent of the American people favored Federal funds for day care centers for preschool children. Only 30 percent said they were opposed. But support must be given effective voice by individuals and organizations. All of us have important parts to play.

I have limited my remarks to the day care shortage. This was the assigned subject of the day. But I must point out that the shortage of before and after school care is even more acute. The government studyto which I referred earlier found that 8 percent of the 6 to 11 year old children of working mothers were fending for themselves when school was out, and much evidence suggests that this is an understatement. The fact that so few of our communities have even begun to recognize this problem, let alone respond to it, is nothing short of a national scandal.

Lets face it. A child care crisis confronts us today and it is intensifying. Let us no longer hide from ourselves the fact that millions of our children today are neglected. Their futures and the future of our society are in jeopardy. Let us lift our sights and do justice to our children and to ourselves.